

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE EDINBURGH ELECTION.

— *Iustum et tenacem propositi virum*

Non civium ardor prava iubentium

Mentiquatit solida.

HOR.

I Am now an old inhabitant of this town, and have always preserved an unvaried respect for it: I have even been a considerable voluntary sufferer, by giving up some lands, necessary for beautifying and rendering it more commodious. Its prosperity always pleased me. May it flourish, secured in its most valuable interests! Such honest feelings have been these few days considerably touched by the sentiments of too many fellow citizens. A general out-cry has been raised against the conduct of the Magistrates, which, I am sure, has been blameless. The liberty of the press has been scandalously abused, in dishonouring those whom we should esteem; the most public and open attacks have been made against characters the most fair and unspotted; a Peer of the realm, a *pater patriæ*, has been loaded with infamy, as the invader of the constitution, and his acceptance of a trust by LETTER, has been received as an insult to liberty, and every valuable concern. Yea Liberty,

"That Goddess heavenly bright,"

has been represented as poisoned by the same letter; and the most solemn custom of attending burials, is to be prostituted on the 10th instant, when a mock interment will be performed in Argyle-square, at the back of the last built houses. A worthy Esquire, just returned from presenting an address, has been traduced, as intending to hurry on the election for a job. — Yea, tumult and disorder has infected every society, insomuch, that merchants and tradesmen have combined together to prevent the election of the proper person, "In so far acting in opposition to the thrice happy, happy constitution of Britain, inconsistently with the trust reposed in them, and surrendering the most valuable rights the city is possessed of."

After I had thrown together these observations, on the ensuing election, I found myself at a loss for a name to my performance. I

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once intended to stile it a *Vindication*, but I at last resolved to grace the title page with *Considerations*, &c. a laudable endeavour to jump with a very great wit, no less than the Considerer on the German war; however. his design and mine are very different; he sounded the trumpet of faction and sedition; I call upon my fellow citizens to despise its voice, and acquiesce in nominating and appointing (if they do not elect) Mr. F—r—r their representative in P——.

The miserable authors of addresses, ballads, &c. &c. &c. unanimously agree in this, that he is an Irishman; I aver that false.—The independant company of merchants believe him a stranger, (*alias* a foreigner;) born in South-Britain; yet I announce him a Scotsman; he is descended from an ancient and honourable family in the north of Scotland, a * family which has been always remarkable for an attachment to the interests of liberty and religion. About the 1715, his father, willing to avoid the confusion which then prevailed in Scotland, retired to France, and after some stay there, he went to Switzerland, and chose the city of Geneva for his residence, in which, he remained several years, and was chiefly busied in defeating the future attempts of the *Pretender*; there our member was born. Philosophers have often proved, that *national characters* depend not upon physical but moral causes; that similar dispositions, and a particular set of manners, descend to children, independent of air, food, climate, &c. That French are French, and Scotch are Scotch, whether they are born in the torrid zone, or the arctic circle: Now this observation is nicely applicable to the dispute in hand; Mr. F—r—r is a Scotsman, begot by a Scots father, and conceived by a Scots mother, and born and bred in the very place whence our ancestors modelled their kirk; he is therefore a sound *Whig*, and a strict Presbyterian.

An *Answerer*, who agrees with me in other circumstances, yet thinks this recommended person cannot be a proper one, because he is unacquainted with the inhabitants, and the company above-mentioned agrees with him. Unacquainted with the inhabitants, he cannot know their trade, customs, laws, inclinations; and so easily answered!—Elect him for that very reason.—We should always elect an absent and unknown (I mean unacquainted) candidate; for when such appear in person, and assiduously court interest, the integrity of the constituents is as much to be suspected, as the qualities of him they chuse; and daily experience shows us, that an insinuating and sly address, goes much farther with most, than the amiable qualifications

* See the Baronage of Scotland newly published.

fications of resolution and public zeal; therefore I admire the proceedings of some Cornish burrows, who never see their member.

As to ignorance of trade, that can be no valid argument; it is entirely managed by incorporated bodies, each of which has its charter, its exclusive privileges, and particular mottoes. For a full knowledge of these, he may peruse (what he has in his library) a late ingenious and accurate history of this city, written by a fellow of the Royal Society; one hour's thinking over which will make him more master of our different branches of industry, than a dozen of years spent among us; or, in case some doubts still remain as to the institution and utility of our corporations, he may send down to the deacon-conveener for a small, but excellent treatise, called, the *Blue Blanket*. As to its customs, he will find the same volume full of them; at least it contains all our good ones, as for the bad ones, the fewer he knows 'tis the better. — As to the laws of the place, I do not know what the answerer means by them; but if he wants to see the acts of the town-council, a few letters may inform him of the most material; I mean the *statutes* against throwing over, and those dividing the city dung or filth. But the merchants are for a citizen who knows their inclinations. — The very worst man in the world: For he will have some destructive favourite *schemes* to propose, or too many friends to *promote*. I have said before, that these, and such like arguments of the writers, are easily answer'd: I think I have advanced and proved the contrary, and all *a posteriori* too. — Yet I confess there is one which strikes me strongly: — How can that *Person* be *proper*, who does not know the situation nor extent of the town he represents? and in case of any particular bill about Edinburgh being presented, how could he talk reasonably, who never walk'd through all its streets, and does not know the direction of the diagonal street, &c. or any other intended improvements? — How could he, with any countenance, support the *long* expected and *necessary* water-bill, who does not know the appearance of the grounds from the fountain to the reservoir? — He must therefore come down for some little time. But he may save himself the trouble, by looking over the Magazine for August 1759, where he will meet with an accurate map of the city, and grounds adjacent, drawn by order of the Lord Provost, on account of the extension of the royalty.

Thus

Thus may he qualify himself for so important a trust: But, heavens! shall we refuse what is our greatest happiness? Shall his shining merit lose its just reward, because,—I blush to say it,—ten or twelve of our counsellors were so impolite as to refuse signing his call: I call them impolite, because the *letter* was no more than a testimony of regard to the judgment of a personage, the greatest of his *own*, or any former *times*; a personage justly famed for political wisdom, and yet altogether estranged from its usual attendants,—art and cunning. In this letter he was desired to recommend a *proper person*; he did so; — I have endeavoured to prove a paradoxical allegation, that a citizen is not, nor cannot be a *proper person*: And my proposition becomes self-evident, when I consider the behaviour of his G——. He wisely thought, that none of the citizens could be proper, because their governors told him so in their address: And they *modestly* declined such a compliment, by referring their wills to his: But, in general, had he not thought citizens *improper*, his affection for the metropolis would have enquired more particularly, and he would not have been forced to procure, in another country, a *proper person* to represent the city in P——. If what is already said, is not sufficient to convince every elector of the propriety of the gentleman pitched upon, what I am now to inform them of, will not only open the eyes most blinded with prejudice, but make them heartily resent their ill-timed opposition. — I am to tell you — *Quis talia fando temperet a lachrymis!* — That a burrow in England, sensible of his conspicuous merit, has returned him their M——, thinking us unworthy of so great an honour. Since this happened, and as I am afraid the reason of his indifference may proceed from his not receiving a formal invitation, I would earnestly intreat the electors *unanimously* to write him a *letter* petitioning him to give up his present burrow, and accept of theirs; and further assuring him, that they will cheerfully defray any expences he may have incurred in obtaining the other. This is the only expedient left; and if this be not followed, we shall remain in a most contemptible state; for if he does not represent us, we may be altogether unrepresented; then,

*Quod genus et proavos, et quæ non fecimus ipsi,
Vix ea nostra voco* —